

Shvetashvatara Upanishad 4.5

अजामेकां लोहितशुक्लकृष्णां बह्वीः प्रजाः सृजमानां सरूपाः ।

अजो ह्येको जुषमाणोऽनुशेते जहात्येनां भुक्तभोगामजोऽन्यः ॥

The meaning of the mantra is as under. After postulating avidyA as the cause of the world, it needs to be stated as to whether this avidyA is born or unborn. In order to address this doubt, the mantra uses the word '*ajA*' i.e. unborn. The objection that the mantra does not use the word avidyA is not tenable because the feminine gender word '*ajA*' is used for avidyA only.

The multiplicity of avidyA is negated by the word '*ekAm*'. The avidyA is one and not many.

That avidyA is capable of producing myriad strange effects on account of being of the nature of three guNAs. This is stated by using the word '*lohita-shukla-varNA*m' which stand for rajas, sattva and tamas guNAs respectively.

The avidyA is engaged in producing (*srijamAnAm*) several (*bahvIh*) similar (*sarUpAh*) offsprings (*prajAh*). That is to say, the effects of avidyA are also composed of three guNAs.

Now, the mantra rejects the birth of jIva which has such avidyA as the limiting adjunct by using the word '*ajah*', unborn.

Further, the plurality of that jIva is rejected by the word '*ekah*', one. The jIva, just like avidyA, is one and not many.

We perceive the plurality of jIvAs in the world, then how can jIva be one? Apprehending such an objection, the mantra uses the word '**hi**' which shows that non-difference is well-known in Shruti and logic.

A doubt may be raised as to how can jIva, which is non-different from Brahman, have a different state than that of Brahman. To address this issue, the mantra says '**anushete**', sleeps. JIva, following that avidyA, sleeps. The meaning is - due to being covered with avidyA, his eyes of jnAna become closed.

Thereafter, the jIva enjoys that avidyA which is situated in the form of effects. Just as the dreamer, he becomes samsArI while enjoying, '**jushamAnah**', the avidyA situated in the form of effect.

One should not object that since avidyA is beginningless, it would be imperishable and hence Moksha would be impossible. To reject such a doubt, the mantra says - '**jahatyenAm**', leaves it. That is to say, the jIva removes such avidyA through the knowledge of Atma-tattva arising from the mahAvAkyAs.

When avidyA is to be rejected then why did jIva take refuge in avidyA (as a limiting adjunct)? For enjoyment. Because enjoyment is born from avidyA. However, by Atma-jnAna, jIva understands the absence of purpose in avidyA and hence leaves that avidyA through which enjoyments were enjoyed - '**bhuktabhogAm**', that through which bhogAs were enjoyed.

The jIva-hood of jIva emanates from the fact that it is qualified by avidyA i.e. jiva is avdiyA-vishishTa. Hence, avidyA is infused in the very definition and very being (swarUpa) of

jIva. If this is so, then how can jIva leave avidyA? To address this doubt, the Shruti says - '**ajah**
anyah', unborn is different. The unborn jIva is different from avidyA. The jIva-hood is not
subsumed in avidyA. avidyA is inert while jIva is conscious. And hence avidyA is accepted as a
limiting adjunct and not as an adjective.